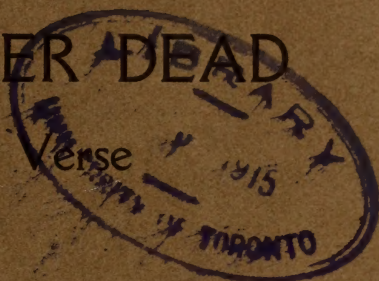


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HER SOLDIER DEAD

and other Verse



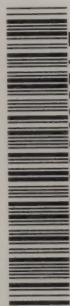
By

SAMUEL VERSCHOYLE BLAKE

Whatever proceeds may accrue to the writer
from the sale of these verses will go to
the Red Cross Fund or to the
Belgian Relief Fund.

25 Cents

1/-



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COME, BUY !

These verses they were written,
By one who had no knittin'
 To get money from each guy ;
So it's only right and fittin'
That you loosen up your mitten,
 And Buy, Buy, Buy !

This ain't no German Taube,
Or any trick or job
 Of a spy ;
Two bits or just one bob
Is all we want to rob
 So Buy, Buy, Buy !

You may be right to spurn them,
We don't care if you burn them
 On the sly ;
You haven't got to learn them
Only never dare return them,
 Just Buy, Buy, Buy !

You must neither steal nor lend,
'Tis a book to give a friend,
 Or if that you should deny,
Buy a copy now and send,
For your enemy to rend.
 Only Buy, Buy, Buy !

For the women that are sighing now,
For the lads that may be lying now,
 With their faces to the sky,
For the children that are crying now,
For they that would be dying now,
It's you that would be buying now.
 So Buy, Buy, Buy !

HER SOLDIER DEAD

Mourn not old mother for your soldier dead !
If mourn you must, then only mourn at all
For those of us who never heard the call,
Or hearing, turned uneasy in our bed ;
For most of us who die are overfed.
The few alone who fight for you and fall,
Their country's flag enwraps them as a pall,
Mourn not old mother proudly hold your head !
Your children knew your sorrow and your mirth,
They drank your tears and laughter from the sea,
Where'er they ranged around the world's wide girth
They told the stories learned upon your knee,
Like leaves whose glorious colour stains the earth
They sent their blood back to the parent tree.

Bare-boughed she stands in Autumn after rain
And sees her children lying on the ground,
Her empty arms stretch vainly far around,
What comfort is there can assuage her pain !
She knows the lost will never come again.
The wind within her branches makes a sound
Of one who seeks for what will ne'er be found,
And seeking knows her search is made in vain.
Yet ere they fell they let their life blood flow
Back to the mother tree from whence it came,
She feels their sap within her fibre glow
And circle round her heartstrings like a flame,
And towering stands that all the world may know
Their life and death are hers and all she asks of fame.

A SCRAP OF PAPER

A scrap of paper—was its surface blank ?
Or was there scrawled across it something fine,
Writ by a starveling poet of no rank
Without the wit his flash of wit to sign ?
Or was it just the crumpled word “to-night”
Flung from her casement window to the lawn,
Crowning its snatcher in the world’s despite
Its happiest of mortals—till the dawn ?
Held it a note of music by Mozart,
Or beauty caught immeshed by magic line ?
Was it a cubic missive of New Art
Or one which sweetly bade us “Come and dine” ?
Was it on this that Shakespeare wove a spell,
Or did it late some vagrant curl unloose,
Or light a pipe in some vile gambling hell,
Or was it made to serve some still more humble use ?

’Twas none of these—for on its face was stamped
The word of Kings, and all mankind may see
To keep its pledge, a million men are camped
While armoured ships stand guard on every sea ;
To break its pledge ’twas twisted as a taper,
They singed a world who lit this scrap of paper.

PRUSSIA CONTRA MUNDUM

"We must have chaos within us to give birth to a dancing star."—*Nietzsche*.

Could they do more if they, not we, were right,
Repulsed for ever—still they come again,
Flinging their men and chargers to be slain,
Ringed by a world of Armies, how they fight.
 Could they do more ?

Over our crawling world they take their flight
Counting all wreck and carnage as their gain.
They loose their bolts from underneath the main
And send their comets screaming thro' the night.
 Could they do more ?

Women and children shield their armoured might,
The rules of war were made for them in vain,
*Their nurses rid our wounded of their pain,
A broken wrist is wholesome in their sight.
 Could they do more ?

But when the battle's fought—the flags are furled
The Treaty signed and there's no need to lie,
Tell us—was all this blood and iron hurled
To teach us cowards how brave men could die ;
Or did they hope to straddle this poor world
And start in conquest 'gainst the shuddering sky ?
 Could they do more ?

* The German nurses are *said* to have killed the wounded Allies by injections of chloroform, and the German soldiers are *said* to have broken their right wrists in a great number of cases.

THE KAISER AND THE TIDY BUTCHER

(It is said that out of fifty thousand called to the colours from Dresden at the beginning of the war only four failed to respond ; one had died the day before ; one was in England ; one was found hiding and shot ; and one, a butcher, was given a second call, and failing once more to respond, was shot.)

“Why tarry you upon your way,
Butcher, Butcher ?
Dawns at last the glorious ‘ day’,
Forward to the battle fray,
O Butcher !”

“I have work that needs be done,
Kaiser, Kaiser !
Cattle killed ere set of sun,
Meat to feed the hungry Hun,
O Kaiser !”

“There is other work for you,
Butcher, Butcher,
Cattle you have killed a few,
Now it’s humans you must hew,
O Butcher !”

“To kill such it is a waste,
Kaiser, Kaiser !
They will neither boil nor baste,
None can make them to our taste,
O Kaiser !”

“You must kill and let them lie,
Butcher, Butcher !
Till a vulture ventures by,
Or they rot beneath the sky,
O Butcher !”

“To kill thus it were not neat,
Kaiser, Kaiser !
It is wrong to waste one’s meat,
I kill only what you’ll eat,
O Kaiser !”

THE WEARING OF THE GREEN

(New Version)

Oh Paddy dear, and did you hear
The news that's going round ?
They've got Home Rule in England,
They've got her safe and sound.
They're keeping her in storage yet,
But the King he's signed her clear.
And when this war is over
Bedad she'll soon be here.

With life so calm and peaceful
'Twill sure be dull at Home,
So it's time we left our moorings
To steer across the foam.
We've fought before beyant the sea,
And tho' now we're out of hand,
Still we always kept in practice
Within our native land.

Now Redmond he's enlisting us
And tho' some are in a huff,
If Bill the Weed wants fighting
I think he'll get enough ;
For the weather here is clear and bright,
The climate most serene.
If we were not wearing Khaki
Why we'd all be wearing green.

*Oh, the wearing of the green,
The wearing of the green.
They're wearing red in Ireland,
While ould England wears the green.*

And with us go the Ulster lads ;
They're on the selfsame route.
And my memory's after failing bad
If they don't know how to shoot.
I wonder if their rifles now
Are those the Germans sent,
For if they weren't quite paid for
They'll now collect the rent.

Last time 'twas Boneyparte
We laid upon the door ;
And now it's Little Willie
Would be spiling for our gore.
So good-bye Tipperary
And the dear ould Irish shore,
For we'll fight for King and country
As we never fought before.

*I met ould father Healy,
And he took me by the hand,
And he asked me how is Ireland,
And how does she stand.
"She's the least distressful country
That ever yet was seen.
For Erin's sons are going
Where the wigs are on the green."*

THE HORSE-BREEDER'S VISION

("They shot my greatest friend from under me—my horse Minnie, the most faithful animal in the world. God forgive them for that. I never will."—*Letter from private in Dragoon Guards, published 1st October, 1914.*)

Then all the warrior horses of the past,
Without beginning and without an end,
Opened their ranks innumeraably vast
To welcome Minnie—this poor soldier's friend.

Untamed Bucephalus stood mounted still
By him alone who could surmount the world ;
While white Marengo answered to the will
That but for Pitt the map of Europe furled.

Stout Copenhagen, that proud hungry hack,
Eclipse's grandson, he that naught could tire,
Bore still the weight of Empire on his back,
As he had borne it once through blood and mire.

They tossed their manes the nameless ones who fell
Flung like a living avalanche to death,
When Roland carried Cardigan through Hell
And all the watchers wondering held their breath.

The vision passed of beauty and of pain.

* * * * *

The buyer left me with his piteous dole
An empty halter and a disused rein,
My fields are empty, now the mare's in foal.

Since Brierly Turk in Erin's wars was seen,
And Sorrel's stumble caused a monarch's fall,
How often empty have our paddocks been
No answering whinney coming from the stall?

Jennie I shipped a week ago to-day.
I still keep looking for her where I go.
I wonder what the price will be for hay,
While all our talk is of the wheat we sow.

OLD WARE

The following lines were written quickly, which is good, and published in haste, which is evil, and there is little virtue in them. They are republished without alteration, and the more the reader is inclined to complain of their inclusion, the more grateful he or she should be for the omission of those others which the writer refrained from printing.

IRELAND

22nd March, 1914

Oh, Country ! pitted o'er with graves
With still divided heart,
Thou land where none need live as slaves,
The good sea girds thee with its waves,
Why wrack thyself apart ?

Is it for this men worked and died,
And women children bore,
That we should range on either side,
And call on Him we crucified
For help to murder more ?

ASQUITH

6th April, 1914

A grey-haired Atlas whose unwearied hands
Hold up the burden of Imperial State,
To which is added now another weight
Calmly before his people there he stands,
Watched by the concourse of unnumbered lands,
And waits the words of unrecorded fate.
No speech from him laden with useless hate :
Union he seeks, but honour he demands ;
No matter what the burden on him laid ;
Steadfast and firm despite all dread alarms,
Simply and frankly is his offer made,
From which no threats can ever make him flinch,
While no arrayed troops nor distraught arms
Disturb his poise the fraction of an inch.

BRITAIN

(Written on the departure of the first Canadian contingent by one who
may go with the last.)

Circling the veined earth from east to west,
The mighty heart of Empire's steady beat
Draws every drop of blood at her behest
To face the foes which she and they must meet.
Like younglings who sought shelter in a nest,
Her children once she suckled at her teat,
Giving them strength from out her bounteous breast,
Now listen to the tramping of their feet !
What though she bleed apace ? Her need is great.
Her flower of manhood droops its head and dies ;
'Tis blood alone that can cement the State ;
She offers up a human sacrifice.

It is the best we have that we must send ;
The worst we have may follow in the end.

THE ORIENT'S WED THE OCCIDENT

June 25th, 1905

*The Orient's wed the Occident,
The bridegroom and his bride
In holy, happy wedlock
Are evermore allied.*

I.

The Japs are curious creatures,
Such funny little blokes ;
Despite their sombre features
They have their subtle jokes.

They say their Navy's English,
We taught them how to shoot,
To rule the ribald ocean,
To raid, to sack, to loot.

Their Army's "made in Germany,"
She taught them how to plan.
They had no need for strategy
In simple old Japan.

They studied in America
Its frenzied high finance,
With its devious horticulture ;
Their Art—they took from France.

For all which gifts they're grateful
And fain would be polite —
Of course they own 'twas Russia
First taught them how to fight.

*The Orient's wed the Occident
By subtle grace subdued,
It was our wondrous witchery
His failing strength renewed.*

II.

But what we want to know is :

Who sold the rotten meat ?

And did the boot* contractors

Learn how to lie and cheat ?

What of their forage scandals ?—

Do they close the stable door,

And hold those stale enquiries

Before, or after war ?

And ere their captains conquered

Did they crown them with the bays,

These patient, thoughtful students

Of our weary Western ways ?

And have they learned the lesson

That he who runs away

Must quickly be promoted,—

To run some other day ?

When the raiders ripped the transports

And they felt the vessel sag,

Ah ! did they, in their hour of need,

Yield 'neath a craven flag ?

The Orient's wed the Occident,

He's looked into our eyes,

Till lost in limpid loveliness

His fainting spirit dies.

*Originally "fish".

III.

They've taken what they needed
From every Christian power,
And where they found no honey
They sought another flower.

They've donned our outer garments ;
They've swotted up our rules ;
They've borrowed our machinery
And taught us our own tools.

But when it comes to writing
Their virtues disappear.
They never pen dispatches
With "advances" to the rear.

They do not tell how hot it was,
Nor talk about the flies ;
Nor whine about their enemies
And call them "perjured spies".

For futile explanations
They have no time, no breath,
They simply signal "Failure"
And cancel that with "Death".

*The Orient's wed the Occident,
There's nothing of him left.
Our maddening, unveiled beauty
Has every sense bereft.*

IV.

Which of the Powers taught them
They'd better break than bend ;
That surrender was dishonour
And suicide a friend ?

Which of their blushing masters
Gave them laconic speech,
Which told them how to practise,
Which told them *not* to preach ?*

Which of us " taught them manners ",
The modest word to say,
Was it " fifty years of Europe ",
Or a " Cycle of Cathay " ?

For how they came to conquer
Has never yet been told,—
What furnace forged their temper,
What goddess cast their mould.

They claim it was their ancestors.
Lord God ! Should they be right !
Will our children have such ancestors
When they put forth to fight ?

*The Orient's wed the Occident—
Who says he heard a laugh ?
We wait for Armageddon
To know the better half.*

*Could it be the Kaiser ?

